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RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3539
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7308
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5045
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, SCA/RA AND PM
PACOM FOR J005 FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR
SECDEF FOR OSD SOUTH ASIA ASST. COUNTRY DIRECTOR C CLARY

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: DEFENSE SECRETARY AND AMBASSADOR REVIEW
MILITARY COOPERATION

REF: A) COLOMBO 0057 B) AMB BLAKE/PACOM E-MAILS

(NOTAL) C) COLOMBO DAO/OSD E-MAILS (NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE, JR. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

11. (S) On January 10, Ambassador and Pol Chief met Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa (ref a). Ambassador noted that

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the U.S. and Sri Lanka wanted to work with each other and with India on interdiction of arms shipments to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (ref b). He said the U.S. was prepared to respond to Sri Lanka's specific requests by gathering all information available about suspected Tamil Tiger ships, including the various types of intelligence, and would pass on actionable items to the Sri Lankan Navy. Gothabaya expressed appreciation for the U.S. willingness to assist.

12. (C) Gothabaya brought up the U.S. offer to provide six 26-foot Boston Whaler "Justice" class patrol boats (ref c) to the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN). He confirmed that the Sri Lankans are extremely interested in acquiring the boats to fill a critical gap in the SLN near-shore patrolling capability. He noted that the boats would be of great use in the shallow waters of the Palk Strait between Sri Lanka and India. Ambassador responded that he had spoken on January 8 to Navy Commander Wasantha Karannagoda, who had also assured him of the Sri Lankan interest and confirmed that it was well within the ability of the SLN to operate and maintain the craft. Ambassador told Gothabaya that he had conveyed the GSL interest to U.S. authorities, but there had been no final decision on the recipient of the boats. Gothabaya thanked him and said that the donation of the patrol craft would be greatly appreciated.

13. (C) Ambassador observed that the planned acquisition by the Sri Lankans of additional coastal radars under the 1206 program, coupled with airborne radars deployed on Beechcraft planes, would greatly assist interdiction efforts by expanding the GSL radar surveillance horizon hundreds of miles out. The Secretary agreed.

¶4. (C) Ambassador inquired about the status of Sri Lankan efforts to cut off illegal transfers of arms to the LTTE. Gothabaya conceded that there were gaps in the Sri Lankan blockade against the Tigers. Clearly some resupply vessels were getting through, he said, because the Tigers had obviously managed to replenish their stores of artillery and mortar ammunition. In fact, an analysis showed that 80% of Sri Lankan army casualties came from artillery and mortar fire, as well as IEDs. However, this also was an indication that the new LTTE recruits were less motivated than their predecessors, since so few of the casualties came from direct fire in close engagements.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: If the U.S. chose to provide the Whalers to the SLN, it would greatly improve the SLN capability to patrol their maritime boundary and rivers against a variety of threats, including weapons smuggling and piracy by the terrorist organization LTTE, as well as narcotics and human trafficking and other criminal/terrorist seaborne activities. The Navy Commander also was gratified to learn that the prospective provision of the boats would be in addition to the current 1206 funding priorities.

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